

# Policy.

for Schools

## General resources for using the Policy.nz tool



This teacher resource is designed to provide starting points when guiding students to engage with the policies on Policy.nz, the complete guide to the 2022 local elections

- Go to [policy.nz](https://policy.nz) and find the elections in your area
- Choose an election and browse the candidates' profiles to learn about who is standing
- Browse the candidates' policies across a range of topics
- Save your favourite candidates and policies by clicking the heart icon

We suggest that you first model the process with your students (you choose one issue and move through this together as a class) and then ask them to carry-out their own social inquiry into a particular policy area or series of policies that are meaningful to them.

For each of the issues, you will need to guide students through a discussion of values, priorities, impacts upon different groups of people – both potential benefits and harms. These discussions will help to strengthen students' ability to make value-based decisions and understand why different people and groups make decisions that are different to their own. It is also important that students see the varied positions that people have on the policy issues. When you lead discussions and set activities, move away from simplistic for/against arguments and foster critical thinking that grapples with the complexities of the issues.

You may like to bring the structure of local government into your lessons. New Zealand has:

- **62 city and district councils** responsible for infrastructure, planning, parks, and services
- **11 regional councils** responsible for environmental planning and rules
- **Five unitary authorities** (including Auckland), with the combined responsibilities of both a city or district council and a regional council
- **67 mayors** – one for each city, district, and unitary authority area
- **110 community boards** responsible for advocating to the council on local issues (in Auckland, these are called local boards, and have slightly greater responsibilities)

This is the perfect opportunity to critically evaluate what it means to have representation or be represented on a council, local board or community board; to look at policies of the candidates and discuss why it is important for all candidates to have a voice.

Throughout this process the role of the teacher is to make it clear that there are no right or wrong answers. Remind students to keep to the issues. Disagreement and dissent is a necessary part of the democratic process, but personal attacks are not acceptable.

For further professional reading we recommend 'Issues-based social inquiry in social studies and citizenship education' by Andrea Milligan, Philippa Hunter and Michael Harcourt: chapter 3 in [Teaching social studies for critical, active citizenship in Aotearoa New Zealand](#).



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### Questions for understanding political agendas

1. Find an election, choose a topic, and compare the candidates' policies.
  - Can you tell what priorities each candidate has? Discuss.
  - What do the set of policies each candidate has tell us about who they are appealing to?
  - What demographics do you think different policies appeal most to?
  - What insight do the candidates' policies give us into their overarching political agenda?
2. Next, browse the candidate's profile pages.
  - What sorts of backgrounds do the candidates have?
  - Are there any similarities or differences between the candidates?
  - Do the candidates' policies seem to line up with their histories or life experiences?

### Questions for looking at policies through different lenses

3. Select an issue that you are interested in and compare two candidates' policies.
  - What are the differences in the policy?
  - How do you think these will affect your community?
4. On an issue of interest to you – save the policies that you agree with. Explain what you perceive the benefits of these policies to be. Discuss with another person in the class.
  - Have you learnt anything new about this person?
  - Have you learnt anything new about yourself?
5. As a class, select a topic that affects children and young people. Save the policies that you think will clearly benefit children and young people.
  - Do you have any suggestions for how to make the policies on your chosen issue more beneficial for young people's lives?
6. Find an environment-related topic and save the policies that you think are good for the environment. Find another person and talk to them about why they made their selections.
  - What have you learned about their values (what is important to them)?
  - Has the conversation made you think about why you chose the policies you did?
  - Has it made you want to change the policies you have selected?
  - Do you have any suggestions about how to make the policies on your chosen issue more beneficial for the environment?



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### **Continuum activity: take a stance and be prepared to justify it**

*Note for teachers: This activity should be completed after students have completed their inquiry into the issue and can be used to prompt meaningful reflection.*

*Students could also draw a continuum and place themselves on it initially, before browsing the Policy.nz tool, and then place themselves on the continuum again in a different colour after the inquiry to reflect upon any changes to their position on the statements. Doing this privately rather than publicly will encourage deeper reflection.*

1. People should vote for the candidates that benefit them the most personally.
2. People should vote for the candidates that will have the most benefit for the most people.
3. People should vote for the candidates that will benefit the most vulnerable.
4. People should vote for the Mayor they want rather than the Mayor whose policies appeal to them.
5. People should only take candidates' policies into account when deciding who to vote for.
6. Policies are not important. It is more important that voters trust the people they vote for.
7. Policies are not important, because after the election the Mayor or the councillors don't necessarily enact the policies they campaigned on.
8. The life experiences of a Mayor or a councillor are more important than their level of expertise in policy.
9. Policy expertise is the most important quality a Mayor or a councillor should have.
10. The most important issue in this year's local elections is housing.
11. The most important issue in this year's local elections is transport.
12. The most important issue in this year's local elections is climate change.
13. The voting age should be reduced to 16.
14. The voting age should be reduced to 12.



Our Ministry for the Environment says: “Climate change is the biggest environmental challenge of our time. It [affects] our agriculture, native ecosystems, infrastructure, health and biosecurity. If left unchecked it will have broad social and economic impacts.” Different parties propose different solutions, and some question whether climate change will really be as bad as scientists warn. In this activity we will explore responses to climate change.

→ Go to [policy.nz](https://www.policy.nz) and find the elections in your area

→ Choose an election and browse the candidates’ profiles to learn about who is standing

1. Read the Ministry for the Environment’s website on how climate change will affect New Zealand [here](#). With the people around you discuss the likely effects of climate change on our economy; on our health; on our water resources, and on summers at the beach.
  - How might climate change affect you and your friends?
2. Carbon emissions are one of the main sources of climate change. One way to respond to climate change is reducing carbon emissions. Read the Ministry for the Environment’s website on New Zealand’s emissions reduction targets [here](#).
  - How do we decide our targets?
  - How have our targets changed over time?
  - Why do you think this might be?

→ Browse the candidates’ policies in the *Climate Change* topic

→ Save the policies you agree with by clicking the heart icon

3. One way to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is planting trees. New Zealand has a lot of land where trees could be planted, but much is already being used for activities like farming.
  - Why might a farmer convert a farm from dairy to forestry? Write a PMI Chart (plus, minus, interesting) for converting farms into forests.
  - Do any regional council candidates have policies about forestry? What are they?
4. Some people believe reducing carbon emissions benefits everyone eventually, while others believe it will hurt our economy. Identify two negative effects of a policy you’ve saved.
5. Converting farms to forestry would reduce net emissions, but would also change the land and might reduce the number of farming jobs available. You can read about this topic [here](#).
  - Do any regional council candidates have policies on this issue?
  - What do you think regional councils should do?



Many of us have enjoyed swimming in our rivers and lakes. We drink fresh water from the tap every day. Our waterways are a part of who we are—many of us have deep connections to our rivers and lakes. But the more we use our water, the more we introduce risks to its quality. So how do we enact kaitiakitanga and protect our water resources for generations to come? In this activity we will explore the importance of freshwater and the policies that can protect it.

→ Go to [policy.nz](https://www.policy.nz) and find the elections in your area

→ Choose an election and browse the candidates' profiles to learn about who is standing

1. “Te Mana o te Wai”—the mana of our freshwater. That’s the term the New Zealand Ministry for the Environment use to talk about the importance of our water. Read [this](#) website.
  - How do you understand what mana means when we think about freshwater?
  - Does Te Mana o te Wai matter to you? Why or why not?
2. Read [this](#) website, and with the people around you discuss the following questions:
  - Where and how are our waterways polluted?
  - Why are our freshwater species and ecosystems under threat?
  - How might climate change affect our freshwater?
  - How might tourists affect our freshwater?
3. Agriculture and tourism are important to New Zealand’s economy—but both can harm our waterways.
  - What could we do to balance their benefits with the costs to our rivers and lakes?

→ Find a regional council election and browse candidates' policies in the *Freshwater* topic

→ Save the policies you agree with by clicking the heart icon

4. For one of the policies you have chosen, write a PMI Chart (plus, minus, interesting).
5. Think back to what you said about how climate change could affect our freshwater. Imagine you are the Minister for the Environment.
  - Can you think of a policy that would reduce our carbon emissions and improve our freshwater at the same time?
6. Imagine you are the Prime Minister, and you need to give a speech about freshwater in New Zealand. Write at least the first five sentences of your speech, thinking especially about including the idea of kaitiakitanga as a strong message in your speech.



We all participate in the economy every day: we contribute when we go to work to earn money, and we contribute when we spend money. Jobs are the way most people earn an income. They allow us to provide for ourselves and for family members who may not be able to work themselves. Councils do different things to create jobs, and to help Kiwis find them. In this activity we'll explore the different ways local government can support employment.

→ Go to [policy.nz](https://policy.nz) and find the elections in your area

→ Choose an election and browse the candidates' profiles to learn about who is standing

1. People can work in the private sector (like businesses) or the public sector (like teachers, nurses, and government officials). Some people believe the government should not interfere with the private sector job market. Others believe that creating, supporting and finding jobs in the public and private sector is one of the most roles a government has.
  - What do you think?
2. The “unemployment rate” measures the number of Kiwis of working age who don't have a job. Have a look at the Statistics New Zealand data on unemployment in Aotearoa New Zealand [here](#) and answer the following questions:
  - What happened to the unemployment rate between June 2008 and June 2009? Why do you think this happened? How did the Global Financial Crisis impact New Zealand?
  - Is there a difference in unemployment rates between men and women? Why do you think this might be? Consider the different roles that men and women have traditionally held in many families. Is this gap likely to change in the future?

→ Browse the candidates' policies in the *Jobs and economy* topic

→ Save the policies you agree with by clicking the heart icon

3. For one of the policies you have chosen, think about its effects on these people:
  - A Kiwi who owns a small business and is struggling to pay the bills.
  - A 22-year-old Kiwi who has just graduated from university and is looking for a first job.
  - A young Kiwi who wants to go into the trades (such as plumbing or hairdressing).
  - A large international company employing 100 highly-skilled Kiwis.
4. Imagine you are a councillor or a Mayor.
  - What three policies would you try to implement first to support jobs and employment?
  - Why did you choose those policies?



The number of people living in our largest cities is increasing quickly, so more people need to move around the city. People need to get to work, to events, shops and other places they need to go. However, our roads and railways were built to cope with much fewer people. Urban Transport policy is about how people can move around in cities. In this activity we'll think about the kinds of policies that are available, and the different costs they have.

→ Go to [policy.nz](https://www.policy.nz) and find the elections in your area

→ Choose an election and browse the candidates' profiles to learn about who is standing

1. Read [this](#) website on Te Ara, showing the increase in the number of people living in cities.
  - Why do you think more people live in cities now?
  - Do you think our cities will keep growing? Why or why not?
2. Now have a look at [this](#) map on the Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Agency) website. It shows current transport projects. Use the map to find a project happening near you:
  - How much is the project estimated to cost?
  - Of the project benefits listed, which do you think is most important? Why? Can you think of a downside to the project?
3. Some people believe roads will remain important, while others believe roads are a thing of the past, and that we should focus on trains, bikes and other forms of public transport.
  - When might roads and cars be better to use than public transport like trains or buses?
  - Where could public transport replace roads and cars without negative effects?

→ Browse candidates' policies in the *Transport* topic

→ Save the policies you agree with by clicking the heart icon

4. Transport projects can be very expensive, and might only benefit people in one area. One example is the proposal to build a Light Rail system from Auckland city to Auckland airport.
  - Imagine you live in Auckland, near where a Light Rail stop might be located. How would you feel about the Light Rail system being built?
  - Now imagine you live somewhere else in Auckland, away from the Light Rail route, and you don't visit the airport very often. Does that change how you feel about Light Rail?
5. For a policy you saved, think about its effect on emissions.
  - Does it help us respond to climate change? How might it impact our emissions?
  - Are any other policies more environmentally friendly? Would they achieve a similar result?



## Rates and revenue

Local councils provide a range of services and infrastructure, like swimming pools, parks, public transport, and drinking water. To pay for these services, councils can collect a range of fees and property taxes (often called 'rates'). Different candidates have different ideas about how much councils should charge for rates. In this activity we will explore and discuss different approaches to rates and council revenues..

→ Go to [policy.nz](https://www.policy.nz) and find the elections in your area

→ Choose an election and browse the candidates' profiles to learn about who is standing

1. Read [this](#) page about how councils raise revenues to pay for their activities and services.
  - What different forms of revenue do councils collect?
  - What are rates, and who has to pay them?
  - Are there any types of property you don't have to pay rates on? Why might a council decide not to tax certain types of property?
2. People have strong feelings about taxes and rates. Some people describe tax as 'love', while others describe tax as 'theft' or 'violence'.
  - Do you agree with either of these views? Read the following resources to help you:
    - [A crazy little thing called tax](#) and [Why are you so afraid of tax?](#) argue that tax is more similar to love.
    - [Tax is not love, it's violence](#) argues that tax is more similar to theft.

→ Browse candidates' policies in the *Rates and revenue* topic

→ Save the policies you agree with by clicking the heart icon

4. Consider the candidates' different policies on rates.
  - Which candidates want people to pay more in rates? What are their reasons?
  - Which candidates want people to pay less in rates? What are their reasons?
5. For one of the policies you have saved, and write a PMI (plus, minus, interesting).
  - How would the policy impact you?
  - How would it impact your family?
6. Think about how you would want the council to raise money if you were a councillor or the mayor. Come up with one or two policies of your own.
  - How would these affect you, your family and your friends?
  - How will you persuade others to agree with your policy? Write three arguments for your policy idea.



We all need somewhere to live, but our houses are some of the most unaffordable in the world. In our country, the average house price is seven times the average income, which is high by international standards. While rising house prices are good for people who own homes, the increasing housing costs shut many of us out of the market forever, increasing inequality. In this activity you will explore and discuss the nature of housing policies.

→ Go to [policy.nz](https://policy.nz) and find the elections in your area

→ Choose an election and browse the candidates' profiles to learn about who is standing

1. What are some advantages and disadvantages of owning your own home? Why might some people rent a house instead of owning a home?
2. Read [this](#) article on housing affordability in New Zealand, looking closely at Figure 5.
  - Which is the only country with less affordable housing than us?
  - Why do you think our housing so expensive?
3. Many different parts of central and local government are focused on housing. Local councils play an important part by building infrastructure that supports housing, and making rules that allow housing to be built. Some councils directly provide accommodation, too. Read [this](#) article on the role of local government in housing.
  - What responsibilities do councils have relating to housing?
  - What is one thing that councils can do to support more housing?
  - What role does the author think councils should play in providing housing?

→ Browse candidates' policies in the *Housing* topic

→ Save the policies you agree with by clicking the heart icon

4. What are the main differences between the candidates' approaches to housing? Do some candidates seem more concerned about this issue than others?
5. For one of the policies you have saved, think about the advantages and disadvantages of the policy.
  - How would it affect someone who owns a house?
  - How would it affect someone renting?
6. Imagine you were a councillor or the Mayor.
  - Would it be important to you that people own their own homes?
  - What are two policy ideas that could increase home ownership?